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- ART. I.—1. *Mahomet and his Successors.* By WASHINGTON IRVING. New York: G. P. Putnam. 1850. 2 vols. 12mo.
2. *The Life and Religion of Mohammed, as contained in the Sheeah Traditions of the Hyât-ul-Kuloob.* Translated from the Persian. By REV. JAMES L. MERRICK, Eleven Years Missionary to the Persians. Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co. 1850. 12mo. pp. 483.

WHEN the followers of Mahomet found themselves involved in hopeless dissension, in consequence of the rival claims of Ali and the Traditionists, the devout among them called to mind the legend which describes the prophet as having divided the moon, and, after holding one half of it in his sleeve for some time, joined it again to the other; drawing from this pious fable the comforting belief, that as the division had proved a foreshadow, so would the reunion. We know not whether any of them care enough for the opinions of infidels to rake up a miraculous legend for consolation under our always wavering, but never very generous, notions of their great leader's merits; but it strikes us that if they did, the perpetual suspension of his coffin between heaven and earth, and its final flight to heaven, might pass very well as a type of the position of his character in the Christianized atmosphere of the world. We are glad to see the theme in the impartial and generous hands of Mr. Irving, by whose efforts, not more romantic than just, it is prevented, — preserved, we

would hope, — from a final subsidence into the Hades of voluntary and self-seeking deceivers. Mr. Irving possesses the rare power — fruit of genial sympathy and most honest intent — of throwing his own mind into the mind he steadfastly contemplates, so as to see with its eyes, understand with its understanding, and feel with its passions; not as the Ghoul inhabits a forsaken form, making the vehicle hideous to those who loved it best in its true being, but rather as some friendly angel might, for a time, reanimate the earthly tenement of one departed, for the sake of explaining what had been unlovely in its past seeming, or of laying open the unsuspected or overlooked sources of its errors. Some lack of potential passion in his own nature is, perhaps, rather an advantage than the contrary, when he assumes the position of an observer and faithful reporter; for if we miss the imposing strength imparted by partisan bias or sectarian malignity, we are also protected from the prejudices which are so apt to cloud the vision of those who look at men and events with the mental eye ever so little inflamed. Besides this enviable impartiality, the biographer of Columbus, of Goldsmith, of Mahomet — an immensely comprehensive triangle — possesses a magic equal to that of the “wise Cornelius,” who, by “gramarye,” could show in his “mirror broad and high,” the absent and the dead, characteristically employed, and wearing the full appearance of life. This excellent faculty completes his fitness for his favorite task.

It may be said of most of the writers on Mahomet, that they appear to have taken up the subject rather in a spirit of religious zeal, than with that cool and resolute justice which guards with peculiar solicitude the fame of an adversary or an obnoxious person. The word “impostor” has been made not only to include a multitude of sins, but to imply all. Not a loophole of escape has been left for the man who could, for any purpose, impose upon the public. To have taught among idolaters the great central truth of the Divine Unity, by means of pretended visions and invented dreams, has been supposed to prove as deep turpitude in one who was himself born and bred in the grossest and most debasing idolatry, as it might in a man of genius and education living under the full light of the nineteenth century. Every evil result of the doctrines of Mahomet, every corrupting principle

and practice of Moslemism, all the wars and desolations of its propagators for a thousand years, — all have been charged upon the Prophet of Arabia, not simply as being the legitimate and lamentable fruit of false doctrines, but as the proper growth and product of his hideously wicked heart and his insatiable lust of sway.

Now, we should blush to appear as the apologists of imposture ; we are, on the contrary, always glad to assist in unmasking a humbug. But this concentrated and particular zeal reminds us of what was said when the Mayor of New York, with the best intentions in the world, caused huge placards to be paraded before the doors of certain mock-auction shops, bearing the inscription “Beware of Humbug!” One of the city satirists, on this occasion, proposed that His Honor should not limit his caution to this one poor specimen of imposition upon the gentle public, but send his emissaries and their huge broadside-sheets into various parts of the town, to take up their stations before brokers’ offices, banks, shops, picture dealers’ windows, etc., even to the very churches, that equal measure might be meted to every one who, for his own private gain, should practise upon the verdancy of the sovereign people. This proposition was never acted upon directly, as far as we are informed ; but it effectually relieved the placarders from their sentinel-like march before the mock-auctions, the injustice of singling them out for reprobation being apparent upon very slight consideration.

But in our desire to bespeak justice and mercy even for an “impostor,” we must not forestall ourselves by preliminary disquisition. It may be said of Mahomet — as it cannot be said of some teachers of whiter reputation — that his life speaks better for him than his doctrines ; and as a presentation of the case in narrative form will be far more entertaining to our readers than any argument of ours could possibly be, we shall proceed at once to trace the career of him who is called among his followers “The Merciful, The Admonisher, The Conqueror, The Messenger of Good News, The Seal of the Prophets, The Sufficient, The Judicious,” and many other names expressive of the most extravagant commendation. In doing this, we use not only the two volumes of Mr. Irving, but the *Hyât-ul-Kuloob*, Ockley’s *History of the Saracens*, Rev. C. Forster’s *Mahometism Unveiled*, and all the other authorities within our reach.

The *Hyât-ul-Kuloob* is a translation from the Persian, by the Rev. James L. Merrick, a missionary who has resided eleven years in Persia, and become well acquainted with the religious opinions and feelings of the inhabitants. It is the Persian Bible, abridged by Mr. Merrick, on account both of its repetitions and of its occasional unfitness for general perusal; the object having been to offer a faithful idea of the original, in a form likely to be acceptable and useful. The Sheeahs, or Persians, are Mahometan heretics, that is to say, belonging to the minority in belief; the Arabs, Turks, and Tatars making up the rival sect of the *Sûnnees*. The sectarian enmity of the two parties has equalled the religious hatreds of Christendom, — more we cannot say, — and although, at our distance, their differences seem small, they are doubtless wonderfully magnified to those who stand nearest. Subjecting the testimony of both sides to the common standards, we give what appears to be the result as to the life and character of Mahomet. As Mr. Irving prefers not to depart from the English spelling of Oriental names, we shall follow his example, leaving “*Mekkah*,” “*Medeenah*,” “*Kâbah*,” and “*Khadeejah*,” to Mr. Merrick and the learned.

Mahomet is generally reputed to have been born of parents remarkable for both beauty and virtue, in the year 569 of the Christian era. Wonderful things are told of his birth, infancy, and childhood; portents and prodigies preceded and followed his advent. “On the night of his birth,” says the *Hyât-ul-Kuloob*, “seventy thousand palaces of ruby, and seventy thousand palaces of pearl, were built in Paradise, all of which were named Palaces of the Birth. And the monstrous fish called *Tamoosâ*, chief of all that swim the sea, having seven hundred thousand tails, and on whose back the same number of bullocks walk up and down, each larger than this world and having seventy thousand horns of emerald, — of which cattle, *Tamoosâ*, on account of his immensity, is unconscious, — this imperial fish, at the birth of Mohammed, was so agitated with joy, that had not the Most High quieted him, he would surely have overturned the earth.” But the Oriental imagination does not stop at these comparatively vulgar credentials of their religious teacher. They inform us, that “The Prophet was covered by his Creator with the shirt of divine contentment, and adorned with the robes of holy reverence. His head was raised to the summit of exalta-

tion by the crown of religious direction. He was invested with the robe of divine acquaintance, bound upon his loins with the girdle of divine love, and he was shod with the sandals of reverential fear, and held the staff of official power in his hand. A divine voice then proclaimed, O Mohammed, go to mankind and direct them to say, 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Apostle of God.' When he was three years old, angel messengers opened his side, took out his heart, wrung from it the black drops of original sin inherited from our forefather Adam, filled it with faith, knowledge, and prophetic light, and then replaced it in his bosom, at the same time impressing between his shoulders the seal of prophecy, which, however, to eyes unanointed, appeared ever like a large hair mole."

More prosaic records say, that Mahomet was nursed in the mountains by a Bedouin woman, named Halêma, and afterward transferred, on his mother's death, to the care of his grandfather, one of the hereditary guardians of the Caaba, or sacred temple of Mecca;* so that his early years passed in a family possessing somewhat of a sacerdotal character, where the ceremonies and devotions connected with the sacred edifice probably gave a bias to his mind, and inclined it to religious speculation. His benefit of clergy did not, however, extend to reading and writing, accomplishments which never came to him, either by nature or otherwise. But nature did something better for him, in endowing him with a thoughtful and observant mind, a boundless imagina-

* Caaba is the name given to a very ancient temple in the city of Mecca, the origin of which is lost in the darkness of remote ages. Centuries before Mahomet was born, and while the Arabs were yet pagans, this building was held to possess a peculiar sanctity; pilgrimages were made to it from distant regions, and that tribe or family was accounted most honorable who were the keepers of its keys. It is an oblong, massive structure, built of large blocks of different sized stones, joined rudely together, and is about eighteen paces in length, fourteen in breadth, and from thirty-five to forty feet in height. Near the door, in the angle of the wall of the northeast corner, is the celebrated "black stone," so devoutly kissed by every pilgrim visiting the sacred city. It is of an oval shape, about seven inches in diameter. According to the fabulous legends of the Mussulmans, it was brought down from heaven by Gabriel, at the creation of the world, and was then of a pure white, but has contracted its present sable hue from the sins of the sons of men. The four sides of the Caaba without are covered with a rich black silk stuff hanging down to the ground, encircled near the top with an embroidered band of gold. This covering, which is renewed every year, is sent from Cairo, at the expense of the Grand Seignior, at the time of pilgrimage, when the old one is cut into small pieces and sold to pilgrims for nearly as much money as the new one costs. *Bush's Life of Mohammed.*

tion, and a soaring ambition, — the qualities, in short, which belong to the most splendid, we will not say the most favored, of her sons. He read men by instinct, if not books ; and the yearly throng of pilgrims to Mecca brought him abundance of the lore most congenial to his aspiring soul. Thus were nursed and developed that comprehensiveness of thought, fervor of enthusiasm, and grandeur of aim, which prepared this mighty genius for his work of uniting in one the scattered tribes of his people, and leading them forth from their solitudes, animated with his own spirit, to establish their dominion over some of the fairest realms of the globe ; a dominion touching at once the frontiers of China, and the Pillars of Hercules, and embracing a territory, says Ockley, “ wide as ever was flown over by the Roman eagles.”

Caravan journeys afforded the only opportunity of seeing any world but that enclosed within the confines of Mecca ; and the future prophet prevailed on his uncle, Abu Taleb, to allow him to make several of these before he was sixteen years of age. The legends recited about the evening fire, at the halting-places of the travellers, seem to have excited his imagination, and made a deep impression upon his mind ; one, in particular, which related to the punishment of certain Jews who had relapsed into idolatry. Perhaps this was more particularly fixed in his memory by means of his intercourse with a convent of Nestorian monks at Bosra, on the confines of Syria. One of these recluses, on conversing with Mahomet, surprised at the maturity of his intellect and his interest in whatever related to religion, seems to have seriously set about his conversion from idolatry, and either at that time or by means of subsequent interviews, to have influenced his opinions for life.

He was afterwards employed as agent or factor in these mercantile expeditions, and frequently attended those fairs which formed an important feature in Arabian traffic, though they were not devoted exclusively to buying and selling, but to poetical as well as pecuniary contests, prizes being offered for the best productions in verse, which were treasured in the archives of princes. Here, too, popular traditions were recited and religious doctrines taught ; the whole combining whatever was fitted to stimulate the mind and fancy of a young man of genius, shut out, through his ignorance of let-

ters, from any but oral instruction. That his abilities were recognized is certain, for he would not otherwise have been chosen as the factor of a wealthy widow, who carried on her second husband's business after his death, and was in the habit of sending caravans to Syria. She employed him in several expeditions, paying him twice the ordinary fee, and concluded by offering him her hand, which he accepted with perhaps more gratitude than love, weighing, we may suppose, the lady's wealth against her superfluous years ; for she had the advantage of him by a score, at least. The story reads like the Arabian Nights, but we must not dwell upon it, further than to say, that Love must have endowed the eyes of the mistress with even something more than his usual magic, since she declared she saw two angels overshadowing the young factor with their wings, as he approached Mecca, under a burning sun, after one of his Syrian journeys. It is pleasant to find that, though the supply of love may at first have been unequally divided between the pair, its sum proved sufficient, in the end, for both ; since Mahomet lived twenty-five years happily with Cadijah, and at her death mourned her with unquestionable sincerity. This fact, on which no shadow of doubt has ever been thrown, should be had in special remembrance in contemplating his character ; since it bears directly on some of the most severe charges against him. As Cadijah is the most important, so she is the most favorable, witness of all who have given testimony respecting the moral character of Mahomet ; she, who knew him best, was the first to believe in his divine mission ; and why ?

As soon as a wealthy marriage had raised Mahomet above the necessity of toil, he ceased to feel the requisite interest in mercantile pursuits, and the fortune of his wife was rather diminished than increased under his slackened management. The habitual bias of his mind was not towards buying and selling, but towards the delivery of his nation from the degrading thralldom of idolatry. His intercourse with the Jews and Christians, who abounded in Arabia, had been the means of awakening his intelligence, and the impressions casually received in the course of his journeyings were strengthened and matured into opinions by the conversation of his wife's cousin, Waraka, a Christianized Jew, who had translated parts of the Old and New Testaments into Arabic, and who doubtless

rejoiced in so excellent and promising a listener. Studying thus to some advantage the inspired writers, a mind preëminently endowed with insight and enthusiasm naturally learned to look with abhorrence on the three hundred and sixty idols of the Caaba, and the absurd fetichism of the popular worship. His genius seized on the main fact or doctrine of the Scriptures — the Oneness of the Supreme — and every thing else soon seemed unimportant in comparison. His people had once possessed this great truth, but they had suffered it to be buried under the fantasies of the Sabeans and the Magians ; deriving from the former a worship of the stars, and from the latter the deification of the sun. They had learned to deem “ either fire or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be gods which govern the world ; ” * and, not content with these comparatively dignified errors, they had with equal readiness embraced the superstitions, the idolatries, and the degrading rites of neighboring nations. Born under the manifold and subtle influences of a system the myths of which were derived in part from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and in which the characters of Holy Writ were made to preside over the grossest practices of delusion and corruption ; profoundly ignorant of all that was agitating the world beyond the confines of Arabia, and without one kindred mind on which to lean for support or confirmation of his struggling thought, Mahomet was able to fix his eyes on the great central light, and to see nothing else, until family and friends were ready, — as common-place people always are ready, — to call the would-be reformer a lunatic, and to fix on him the disabling stigma of conceit and folly. We are only wise to the world while we agree with it ; it hates and resists originality as long as possible, as the morning sleeper detests the rap at his door, even though it call him to his breakfast. When Mahomet, at about forty years of age, began to absent himself more and more from society, and was known to dwell in solitude and silence, for weeks together, in a cave on Mount Hara, lying on the earth, his face enveloped in his mantle, engaged in prayer and meditation, the

* Wisdom of Solomon.

consistent and well-known excellence of all his past life was not sufficient to ensure for him a generous, or even a respectful construction. Society lifted its sage eyebrows at the enthusiast, and was quite prepared to regard as absurd any thing that might be the fruit of these mountain reveries. Cadijah, however, who was sometimes permitted to attend him, seems to have acknowledged his claims at once, and that on the most substantial ground. When her husband, after long fasting and prayer, declared to her that he had been the subject of a miraculous manifestation, frankly confessing, at the same time, that he was himself in trembling doubt of its reality, so great was his astonishment and awe to find himself thus distinguished, — “Joyful tidings dost thou bring,” she exclaimed, with the enthusiasm of affection, at least, if not of conviction; “by Him in whose hand is the soul of Cadijah, I will henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation!” (Arabia having had several pretenders to this honor before Mahomet’s time.) Then, to encourage his evidently sinking heart, she added, “Allah will not suffer thee to fall into shame. Hast thou not been loving to thy kinsfolk, kind to thy neighbors, charitable to the poor, hospitable to the stranger, faithful to thy word, and ever a defender of the truth?” Cadijah seems to have known what are among the indispensable, if not the characteristic, proofs of a divine mission, and to have considered her husband’s claims good as far as these went.

It is worthy of observation, that even those who hold the worst opinion of Mahomet allow him thus far the praise of sincerity and piety. This first celestial vision is represented as nothing worse than a delusion. Ockley, indeed, who mentions Laud as “that incomparable prelate and martyr of blessed memory,” says that Mahomet “affected solitude,” and speaks of this as a “pretended revelation,” adding a kindly hint, that the impostor probably murdered the Nestorian monk who had been his instructor. But Dr. W. C. Taylor, in his history of Mohammedanism, published under the direction of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, interprets the enthusiast more generously.

“Solitary meditation,” he says, “is the parent of a regulated enthusiasm; not the fierce flame which a breath can kindle and a breath extinguish, but that sober, steady determination which

presses on to a definite object, using every means for its accomplishment that prudence or wisdom may dictate. It is not unusual for the mind in solitude to embody, as it were, the phantasms of imagination, and mistake its own creations for absolute existences. Inexplicable visions have appeared to men of the strongest intellect; nay, such men are peculiarly liable to such deceptions; the gigantic figure that foretold Cromwell's greatness, and the ghost of Cæsar in the tent of Brutus, were the creations of powerful intellect under high excitement. We do not, therefore, stigmatize Mahomet as a liar for saying that the angel Gabriel commanded him to undertake the prophetic mission; it is very possible, nay, highly probable, that a vivid imagination imposed upon his senses, and that he really believed himself divinely commissioned."

This opinion appears to us so just and valid, that we are surprised to find it limited to the first vision; since prayers, fastings, and solitary musings equally marked the future years of the enthusiast, and he is known to have been subject to epileptic attacks, which were probably the consequence of these severe mental exercises, as we have no previous mention of them in any of the accounts.

After Cadijah, the next convert to the new faith was Zeid, a slave who resided in the prophet's house, and who was restored to freedom on the occasion, a precedent religiously followed ever since by devout Moslems, who have yet to learn of Christians any great respect for the 'peculiar institution.' Zeid remained, however, devoted to Mahomet, as did whoever saw him nearest, throughout his entire career. In three years, some forty converts were made, and private meetings for prayer and preaching were held, either at the house of one of the number, or in a cave near Mecca. Rumors of the heresy soon got abroad, and the Koreishites, to whose tribe Mahomet belonged, felt themselves disgraced by his defection from the established religion with all its charms of idolatry and infanticide. Persecution ensued; at first, of that quiet and respectable kind which, while it inflicts subtle torture upon the innovator, redounds much to the credit of orthodoxy; afterwards bolder and more vulgar, in the form of mob violence, the *animus* of which is always derived from the opinions of creditable people. In both shapes, it preyed upon the sensitive and sympathetic nature of Mahomet, who grew pale and haggard, and showed such evident signs of decaying

health and strength, that his friends feared for his life, while his foes threw imputations upon his sanity.

More watchings, prayer, and fastings, and then a vision commanding him to "arise, preach the truth, and magnify the Lord." He invited his tribe to a conference, and propounded his mission; declaring that he was sent by God to restore the only true and ancient religion, which had been professed by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets; or, in other words, to destroy the gross and horrible idolatry into which most of his countrymen had fallen. The very mention of this heresy inflamed to such a degree the religious zeal of his uncle, Abu Lahab, whose son was married to Mahomet's daughter, that he broke up the assembly in a rage, and, not content with this, forced his son to repudiate his wife, Rokaia, and send her home in disgrace to her father.

Nothing discouraged, but perhaps rather inspired by these outrages, the reformer again invited his kinsfolk, and made a feast for them at his own house. After they had eaten, he addressed them as before, adding, "I know no man in Arabia who can offer his kindred a more excellent thing than I now do to you: I offer you happiness both in this life and in that which is to come; God Almighty hath commanded me to call you unto him." He then exposed the folly of idolatry with severe ridicule, asking what reliance could be placed on senseless images, whose eyes saw not, and whose ears heard not. In conclusion, he cried with animation and confidence, "Is there one among you who wishes to be my vizier and lieutenant, as Aaron was to Moses?" The young Ali, finding that no one better qualified was disposed to speak, with modest enthusiasm responded to this appeal; and Mahomet, throwing his arms about the generous youth, and pressing him to his bosom, proclaimed him his brother and chief friend. This excited nothing but laughter in the company, who ironically congratulated Ali on his dignity, and reminded his father that he must now obey his own son.

The spread of the new tenets was comparatively rapid after this outbreak. The common people gladly believed; the women, who, as Mr. Irving gallantly observes, are ever prone to defend a persecuted cause, were well inclined towards this; and even the Jews, who were still on the watch for

their Messiah, were not indisposed to look favorably on the pretensions of one who, by his talents, virtues, and prepossessing qualities, promised so well. These last, however, when they found the new prophet tolerating the eating of camel's and swine's flesh, withdrew from him in disgust, although they do not appear at that time to have joined the ranks of his persecutors.

Mahomet continued to announce revelations, which were committed to writing by chosen disciples.* When scoffers demanded miracles in testimony of his mission, he referred them to these writings, defying them to produce the like. He said he was God's messenger, but still a man like themselves. "If God had seen fit to send an angel to you," said he, "you would have doubted, as now, and your destruction would have been instantaneous. You ask miracles. God gave to Moses the power of working miracles, yet Pharaoh doubted. Would ye dare the punishment of Pharaoh?"

The Koreishites, who, as we have seen, were the hereditary guardians of the Caaba, now saw their craft in serious danger, and they threatened the life of the eloquent pretender, whose success had so far outrun their anticipations, making a solemn covenant among themselves to destroy him, and laying a copy of it in the Caaba for the greater security and weight. This instrument Mahomet discovered, and he sent word to the conspirators that God had sent a worm to destroy the wicked compact, by eating away every part of it but that which bore his holy name.

This accident, which shows Mahomet's sagacity in availing himself of the superstition of his enemies, put an end to the league; Mecca was, however, still unsafe for the followers of the new faith. The prophet sent away his disciples, and, some say, retreated himself, into Abyssinia, where he was coldly received, the chief man saying in reply to his request

* Dr. Taylor thinks it probable, that Mahomet never intended to collect these scattered revelations, but used them only for special purposes. After his death, they were brought together by order of Abu Beker, but without the least order or consistency. "A collector of Sibylline leaves," says he, "put together after the wind had scattered them, by a person who could not read, would scarcely present a more anomalous compound than the Koran in its present state. There would be little addition and still less alteration required to reconcile pure Islamism and pure Christianity; the more both become corrupt, the more they diverge into hopeless irreconcilment."

for aid against the violent hatred of his countrymen, "If you are the envoy of God, you need no allies; if you are an impostor, you are unworthy of an answer." The refugees continued, however, to abide quietly in Abyssinia until their numbers had reached about one hundred, while their leader returned to Mecca, where he preached his doctrine as he could find hearers, under the protection of some of his relatives, who, though disagreeing with him in sentiment, were induced to watch over his personal safety by the strong feeling of kindred common to the Arabians, if not by habitual respect for Mahomet. One of his followers complaining to him of the injuries heaped upon them by the Koreishites, he reddened, and said, "Those who were believers in former times were some of them raked to pieces with iron combs, and others were sawn asunder; yet they patiently endured, and did not forsake their religion. Do ye, then, endure patiently, for verily God will so completely establish this faith, that a single horseman who believes may go alone from Senau to Hazramoot, and fear nothing but God."

Among the personal outrages of this period, the Hyât-ul-Kuloob records the following, in the true Oriental tone:—

"Mohammed proclaiming his mission at a time when pilgrims were assembled at Mekkah, stood for that purpose on Mount Safâ, and cried with a loud voice, 'O ye people, I am the apostle of the Lord of the universe.' The people looked at him in wonder, but were silent. He then ascended Mervah, and three times repeated the same announcement. On hearing this, Abujahl hurled a stone at him, which wounded his luminous forehead. The rest of the idolaters then caught up stones and pursued him. . . . In this state of things, Jibrâeel (Gabriel) descended to Mohammed, who wept at meeting the angel, and said, 'See what my people have done to me; they have charged me with falsehood, and wounded me with the stone of oppression.' 'Give me your hand,' said Jibrâeel; and he seated the prophet on the top of the mountain. He had brought under his wing a carpet of Paradise, which was woven of pearls and rubies; this he spread in the air, and it covered all the mountains of Mekkah; and again taking the hand of Mohammed, he seated him on it, and said to him, 'Do you wish to know in what estimation you are held by the Most High?' Mahomet replied in the affirmative. 'Then call that tree to you,' said Jibrâeel. Immediately it obeyed the summons, and made a religious prostration before the prophet, and on his

ordering it to return, it promptly obeyed. The angel Ismâeel, the regent of the first heaven, now descended, and, saluting the prophet, said, 'My Lord has commanded me to obey you implicitly in every thing. If you order, I will pour the stars upon your enemies, and burn them.' The angel of the sun appeared, and offered to consume Mohammed's enemies by bringing the sun upon their heads; the angel of the earth proposed to have them swallowed up by the opening ground; the angel of the mountains wished to hurl all the mountains on them; the angel of the ocean asked permission to drown them beneath the mighty waves of the sea. Having first demanded of these angels if they were all commanded to aid him, and receiving an affirmative answer, he raised his blessed face toward heaven and said, 'I am not sent to inflict judgment, but am enjoined to be the mercy of the universe. Leave me to my people, for they are ignorant, and this is the reason of their treating me thus.'"

This brings us to the twelfth year of the preaching of Mahomet, that in which is placed by his disciples his journey to heaven, a fiction which, while it is cited as proof conclusive of unblushing imposture by some writers, is considered by others as being a mere invention of his unscrupulous advocates, using to the uttermost the Oriental gift of exaggerated description and unbounded panegyric. Mr. Sale supposes it "a fetch of policy, to raise his reputation by pretending to have actually conversed with God, as Moses had heretofore done;" Dr. Prideaux, that "he invented it either to answer the expectations of those who demanded some miracle of him, or else, by having pretended to have conversed with God, to establish the authority of whatever he should think fit to say;" but Dr. Taylor, though writing for an expressly religious purpose, and therefore liable to merge candor in zeal, says, "The narrative of the night journey to Heaven is placed in the appendix, for of this monstrous fable I believe Mahomet himself to have been perfectly innocent."

The night-journey reads a good deal like some of the revelations of Swedenborg, though it has features truly Oriental, and also much puerility mixed with its soaring splendor. Gabriel, who is described as having "a complexion white as snow, white hair finely plaited and hanging in curls about his shoulders, ten thousand little perfume bags of musk and saffron hanging about him, two plates on his forehead, one inscribed, 'There is no God but God,' and the other, 'Maho-

met is his prophet,' and five hundred pair of wings, from one of which to the other was a journey of five hundred years," — is the guide and companion of the prophet; but he provides for the transit from earth to heaven no better conveyance than "a white beast, less than a mule, but larger than an ass;" though, to be sure, this rather ignoble "ship of heaven" was no less adorned with gems and radiance than the angel himself. After visiting Jerusalem, where a ladder of light is let down from heaven for them, on which they ascend, — Gabriel enfolding the prophet in his wings to preserve him from harm, — they arrive at the first heaven; Adam meets them — "a very large man, of a wheaten complexion," — and they exchange felicitations and encouragement; afterwards Yousuf, (Joseph,) who is represented as "exceeding all other men in beauty, as much as the full moon exceeds the stars," and he salutes Mahomet as a brother. In the sixth heaven, the travellers encounter Moses, who says, "The Israelites think me dearest with the Most High, but this man, (meaning Mahomet,) is dearer than I am." Very many of the wonders were significant, as this: "There was an angel of immense size, half of whose body was fire and half snow; the fire did not melt the snow, nor the snow quench the fire. He cried with a loud voice, "I ascribe holiness to the Lord who preserves entire the conflicting elements of my being; O Lord, who hast united snow to fire, impart unity to the hearts that believe in thee." On inquiring who this was, Gabriel said, "This is the most benevolent angel of God towards true believers, and from the day of his creation until now, he has uttered this prayer for the objects of his good will."

They find the Angel of Death, holding the world between his knees, and a written tablet in his hand, on which he looked with the steady gaze of a melancholy man. Gabriel remarks, that this angel's work is greater and more severe than that of any other angel; upon which, the prophet inquires whether the dread minister was obliged to approach every individual. "Yes," said the melancholy angel; "there is not a house whose inmates I do not observe, one by one, five times every day. When relatives weep the departure of a friend, I say to them, 'Weep not for him, for I must visit you again and again, until none of you are left.'" Mahomet observes,

“Death is enough to cause grief and overwhelming sorrow.” “That which follows death,” says Gabriel, “is far more dreadful than dying.” Mahomet, seeing a company suspended by their feet on hooks of fire, found they were thus because, when the Most High had made them rich in lawful things, they coveted those which were unlawful. A number of angels were employed in building palaces of gold and silver bricks; but observing them stand idle, the prophet inquired the reason. They replied, “We wait till our expenses are paid.” “What expenses?” “The devotions of believers. Whenever they cease to ascribe praise to God, our work also ceases.” In another part of heaven, were people having camels’ lips, and the angels were cutting pieces off the sides of these unhappy beings, and throwing them into their mouths. At Mahomet’s inquiry, Gabriel said, “These derided believers and sought out their faults.” Another company were forced to swallow fire; these had devoured the property of orphans.

Whether or not Mahomet is justly to be charged with the fabrication of this stupendous fiction, which, as recited in the *Hyât-ul-Kuloob*, is full of a certain wild and solemn interest, it is certain that his fortunes were never darker than at the time, and after, it is said to have been used as an instrument of conversion. Cadijah was dead; the Koreishites were more exasperated than ever; the pilgrims who came annually to worship at the Caaba, among whom Mahomet, in the days of his conformity, had “walked as a god,” now shunned a man stigmatized as an apostate; only his uncles dared to protect him, and of these, Abu Taleb, his firmest friend, had departed unconverted. A place of refuge was therefore most desirable; but no city was willing to receive him whom his own people cast out.

At length, as he was one day preaching on the hill Akaba, near Mecca, he drew the attention of some pilgrims from the city of Yathreb, (Medina,) pure Arabs of the tribe of Khazradites, who had often heard of Mahomet through the Jewish inmates of their city, while they were favorably disposed towards the reformer, because he insisted on the Divine Unity. Moved by the eloquence of Mahomet, and attracted by his doctrine, which they received without the prejudice which closed the ears of his own people, they avowed themselves his converts, and he sought to return with them to Medina.

This, however, they declined, alleging as a reason, that they were at deadly feud with another tribe, and therefore unable to offer protection to a stranger. Mahomet, with his usual sagacity, acknowledged the force of their objection, but persuaded them to take with them in his stead Musab Ibn Omeir, one of the most able and learned of his disciples, who was instructed to preach the faith on this new field. Musab proved worthy of his mission, and after he had made converts of some of the principal men at Medina, several other Moslems, tormented by opposition and contempt at Mecca, retreated also to the city of refuge, becoming each, doubtless, in some sense a preacher of the persecuted opinions. Foothold being thus well established, it was judged advisable to invite the prophet to take up his abode at Medina, and upwards of seventy converts went as a deputation to escort him thither. His uncle, Al Abbas, distrusted the prudence of the measure; but Mahomet, having met his disciples in secret conference, made a solemn compact with them, requiring that they should openly abjure idolatry and profess the worship of the true and only God, yield obedience to himself in weal or wo, and grant to him and his disciples such protection as they would extend to their own wives and children; engaging, on his own part, to remain among them, to be the friend of their friends, and the enemy of their enemies. When the converts very naturally inquired what was to be their compensation, in case their adherence involved destruction, as it seemed very likely to do, — “Paradise!” was the reply; and it proved satisfactory.

Mahomet did not accompany his new allies at once to Medina. He lingered awhile in Mecca, perhaps hoping yet to be enabled to persuade his kinsfolk and neighbors to embrace the truth; for if we gather from conflicting testimony any personal fact about him with certainty, it is that he had a most affectionate nature. The return for his solicitude was a concerted attempt to murder him, as he lay sleeping and unconscious. He received warning, however, and when the conspirators arrived at his house, they found only Ali, wrapped in the green mantle of the prophet. Good Moslems ascribe the preservation of their master to miracle, saying that Gabriel gave him intelligence of the bloody plan, and that, as the Koreishites stood at the door, Mahomet passed through

the midst of them, scattering a handful of dust in the air, which struck them all with blindness. More earthworthy accounts state, that he escaped by a back door, and took hiding in the house of Abu Beker, who accompanied him to a cave in Mount Thor. Scarce had they reached the cave, when they heard the sound of fierce pursuit. Abu Beker, though a brave man, quaked with fear, exclaiming that their pursuers were many, while they were but two. "Nay," replied Mahomet, "say three; for God is with us!"

The pursuers, incited by the promised reward of a hundred camels, searched every nook of the mountain. On reaching the cave in which the friends lay concealed, the graceful fable is, that an acacia tree had sprung up before it, in the spreading branches of which a pigeon had made its nest and laid its eggs, and over the whole a spider had woven his web. Deceived by these signs of undisturbed quiet, the Koreishites turned away, and the prophet and his future general had leisure to lay their plans for further retreat. These pointed, of course, to Medina, where friends were impatiently awaiting their approach. After a journey fraught with danger, they reached Koba, a fruitful spot about two miles from Medina. Here they halted, and sent intelligence of their arrival to their friends within the city. So many came to greet them, that a public entrance was decided upon; and after four days' repose at Koba, the prophet, after assembling his followers for prayer and a sermon, mounted his camel and set forth, attended by seventy horsemen as a guard of honor, his disciples taking turns in holding over his head a canopy of palm-leaves. One, more enthusiastic than the rest, exclaimed, "O Apostle of God, thou shalt not enter Medina without a standard!" and, so saying, unfolded his turban, and tying one end of it to the point of his lance, bore it aloft before the prophet, little dreaming of the splendid triumphs to be achieved beneath it in after times. A crowd of new proselytes came forth from the city to meet the procession, and he who had left Mecca in fear of his life, entered Medina like a victorious leader, the inhabitants contending who should have the honor of entertaining him.

This is the Hegira, or Flight, from which all true believers date. It took place in the year 622 of the Christian era.

Mahomet's first care was to erect a place of worship as a

centre of interest for his followers ; and, choosing a convenient position, he proceeded to build the first mosque, a large but simple structure, unpeeled trunks of the date-palm serving as pillars to support the roof, which was thatched with its leaves. A part of the edifice was assigned as a habitation to such believers as were without homes of their own. Mahomet assisted in its erection with his own hands, a specimen of the simplicity and absence of all outward pride which distinguished him through life. The question as to the mode in which believers were to be summoned to prayer was decided by a suggestion of Abdallah, a seeming friend, afterwards a rival, who proposed a form of words to be cried aloud ; — a unique method at once adopted, and continued to this day by the muezzin from the minaret, wherever the religion of Mecca is acknowledged. Eastern travellers dwell much upon the touching beauty of this call, sounding in the holy hour of dawn, or under the burning stillness of noon ; “ God is great ! There is no God but God ! Mahomet is the apostle of God ! Come to prayer ! ” each phrase being twice repeated. At dawn is added the sentence, “ Prayer is better than sleep ! ” For evening worship, the new mosque was lighted with splinters of the kindly palm ; and when the prophet preached, he stood leaning against one of its primitive pillars.

It requires no great stretch of charity to believe, that, up to this period, at least, his motives were pure and his piety unfeigned. His precepts — borrowed, doubtless, from Christianity ; but does not the borrowing bespeak appreciation ? — were humane and beneficent ; charity, humility, self-denial, and forgiveness of injuries were his favorite themes. To charity he gave almost as comprehensive a definition as the apostle ; though alms-giving had ever his especial commendation, perhaps because adherence to him brought poverty on so many of the faithful. His doctrines procured him toleration, at least, from the Christians at Medina, some of whom, not very strong in their own faith in that day of its utter corruption, became his converts. The Jews showed him less favor ; but he managed to conciliate many of them by appointing Jerusalem as the Kebla, or sacred place, towards which believers should turn their faces in prayer.

Once established on firm footing at Medina, Mahomet seems to have forgotten his peaceful precepts, or to have con-

cluded, with the convenient logic of so many other law-givers, that they were not calculated for the regulation of public affairs ; for he now began to send out small parties to make reprisals on his enemies, the Koreishites, by attacking their caravans in the desert. Success in these enriching forays soon brought adherents in flocks to the turban-standard ; and the prophet, in the course of two years, found himself in a condition to attack a prodigious caravan, for the protection of which the Meccans had sent an escort of nine hundred and fifty chosen men. This was an undertaking which called for all the military ability of the priest-soldier, for his force numbered scarcely a third of his adversaries, and their discipline was far from being perfect. Like Napoleon, however, he took care to strengthen his men with grand ideas and magnificent promises. "The sword," he said, "is the key of heaven and hell ; all who draw it in the cause of faith will be rewarded with temporal advantages ; every drop shed of their blood, every peril and hardship endured by them, will be registered on high, as much more meritorious than even fasting or prayer. If they fall in battle, their sins will be blotted out, and they will be transported to heaven, there to revel in eternal pleasure."

By way of apology for instructions so much at variance with the doctrines of peace he had preached during the days of persecution and humility, he declared that different prophets before his time had been endowed with the divine gifts of persuasion, purity, and the power of working miracles, but all these had proved insufficient to overcome the wickedness of men. To him, as the last of the holy band, was entrusted the sword of extermination. To this assurance he added various rules of warfare, no doubt much to the comfort of his wounded conscience. "Burn no date-trees, nor flood them to destroy them ; cut down no fruit-trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Destroy no animals except for food. Poison not the water of infidels, neither lie in wait to slay them at night. When you meet the enemy, summon them to become Mussulmans ; if they consent, direct them to go to the capital of Islam after professing the faith. If they will not receive the faith, offer them the condition of tribute, and if they agree to this, do not attack them. But if they refuse the condition of tribute likewise, seek help from God, *and fight them as truth requires.*"

Under this last clause, the new converts fought very heartily. The attack on the great caravan proved entirely successful. Mahomet passed the whole preceding night standing under a tree, in prayer and supplication ; and in the morning, finding his followers rather disheartened because of the smallness of their number, consoled them with a new verse of the Koran, — “ Verily I will assist you with a thousand angels following one another in order. Victory is from God alone, and God is mighty and wise.” When Atabah, who commanded the caravan, saw that the combat was inevitable, he commanded his brother and his son to arm themselves in helmets and coats of mail, and, for himself, wound two turbans together by way of defensive armor for the head ; then, sending a defiance to Mahomet, he challenged him to send out an equal number of champions, wishing to spare blood. Mahomet chose his cousin Abaydah-bin-Haris, his uncle Hamza, and the youthful Ali, whom he ever loved like a son. He exhorted them to implore the aid of the Most High, who would not suffer his own light and truth to be extinguished. The idolaters were vanquished, and one of the Moslems — Abaydah, who was an old man — mortally wounded. Carried to the tent of Mahomet, the dying man exclaimed, “ O prophet of God, am I a martyr ? ” “ Yes,” replied Mahomet, deeply grieved, “ the first of my kindred.” The Persian Bible proceeds thus : —

“ Eblis himself took the Koreish banner, to lead on the attack. The prophet, seeing this, ordered his companions to cover their eyes, and not draw their swords until he gave permission. Then raising the hand of necessity to Him who is above all necessity, he prayed and supplicated, saying, ‘ O Lord, this band are the helpers of thy faith : should they be killed, no one will worship thee again on earth.’ The prophet then swooned, which was a sign that a divine communication was being made to him. When he recovered, perspiration flowed from his luminous forehead, and he exclaimed, ‘ Gabriel is now coming to your aid, with a thousand angels.’ A black cloud appeared, attended with thick flashes of lightning, and standing over the army of the prophet. The Mussulmans heard from it the clang of arms. . . . Abu Jahl advanced between the two armies and cried, ‘ O Lord, our faith is old, Mahomet’s is new ; aid that which pleases thee best.’ As the armies were now come to an engagement, Ali took up a handful of sand and gave it to the prophet, who, at the command

of Gabriel, cast it at the enemy, repeating the Arab execration, 'Ugly be these faces!' At that instant, the Most High sent a wind which drove the sand in the enemy's face, and they fled, and on whomsoever a particle of sand fell, he was slain that day. Abu Jahl fell, among the rest, and Mahomet, looking at his body, said, "May God give you a bad award for calling me a liar when I was true! This man was more rebellious than Pharaoh, who confessed the unity of God when certain destruction awaited him; whereas Abu Jahl, in such circumstances, called on Lat and Uzzy."

In this combat, called the battle of Beder or Badr, the Mussulmans came off victors, the losing party consoling themselves for unexpected defeat by saying that angels fought against them. It is somewhat significant that they added, that all these angels wore the form of Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet, who was the bravest and the most enthusiastic of all the Moslem chiefs.

Mahomet, thus triumphant, was the master of Medina, and assumed the tone of a sovereign lawgiver. The Jews, whom he had found it impossible to convert, now became thorns in his path, and he seized every opportunity to humiliate, if not to persecute, them. The Koreishites, too, exasperated rather than discouraged by their overthrow at Badr, were ever ready to renew hostilities; so that the history of Mahomet for some years from this period is but a history of battles, in which he was generally, though not invariably, victorious. His army, greatly increased in numbers, was yet defeated with considerable loss at Ohod, although "Ali fought with his own sword till it was broken, and then the prophet gave him his own sword, Zoolfakar, by which he sent away every wretch that dared to attack the prophet to the lowest hell; and among the Meccans was Hind, daughter of Atabah, who scornfully offered a material for dyeing the eyes to every one who fled, saying, 'Take these implements, you woman, and claim no more to be a man!'" On viewing the dead body of his uncle Hamza, slain and shamefully mutilated by the enemy, Mahomet wept and said, "God helping me, I will serve seventy of the Koreish in the same manner." Under the emotions of the hour, a revelation came to him too characteristic to be omitted: "If ye take vengeance on any, take a vengeance proportionable to the wrong which has been done

you ; but if ye suffer wrong patiently, verily this will be better for the patient." Here spoke out both the man of power and passion, and the religious devotee. It is to the honor of the reformer that he listened to the gentler voice, and forbore revenge.

We shall not attempt the detail of future battles, but select some picturesque Oriental traits which bear upon the character of our hero and his people. After a victory over the Koreish, Fatimah, the daughter of Mahomet and wife of Ali, had just brought water for the refreshment of her father after the campaign, when Gabriel appeared, mounted on a mule, and having a piece of the satin of Paradise, embroidered with pearls and rubies, thrown over his shoulders. He, too, was covered with dust, which Mahomet, rising, brushed away ; upon which, the angel said to him, "The Lord be merciful unto you ! you have your armor off sooner than the hosts of heaven, who have been pursuing the Koreish, and giving them much annoyance. The Lord now commands you to perform evening prayers to-day in no other place but by the Benee Kareezah, (the enemies of Mahomet.) I will myself precede you and shake their walls, and will crush the enemy like an egg-shell dashed to atoms by a stone." On their approaching the walls, certain men appeared, reviling the prophet and his army. Mahomet replied, "Ye brothers of asses and hogs, and worshippers of idols, do ye revile me ? it is a bad day for any people when we besiege them." The man answered, "Verily, O Mahomet, thou wert never known as a reviler." At this remark, the prophet dropped his cloak and staff, and retreated backwards several steps, through excessive shame, to think of his unbecoming behavior.

Ali is the Moslem Samson, so far as tales of wonder about his strength and powers go ; and with the aid of an Arabian Major Longbow, he is made far to exceed the scourge of the Philistines. Take a specimen or two.

Ali, at the head of the Mussulmans, encountered the champion of the enemy, on whose head was a helmet, surmounted by a large stone ring. Chanting heroic odes, the two warriors encountered, and Ali cleft the Yehoodie (Jew) through ring, helmet, and head. Then, seizing the gate, he shook it so violently that the whole fortress trembled ; and at length, tearing the gate from its fastenings, he used it as a shield, and hurled it to forty cubits distance, where seventy men tried in

vain to lift it. After this display, Gabriel appeared to Mahomet in great amazement. Upon the prophet's inquiring the cause of his agitation, he replied, "The angels in heaven shout, There is no hero but Ali! but my own wonder is this: I was once ordered to destroy the people of Lot, and took up seven of their cities from the foundation of the seventh earth, and carried them, on a single feather of one of my wings, so high that the inhabitants of heaven heard their cocks crowing. I held them there till morning, awaiting the orders of the Most High, and the weight of the seven cities was not even perceptible by me. But to-day, when Ali shouted Allah Akbar! and gave Marhab that Hashem-like blow, I was commanded to sustain the excess of it, lest it should cleave the earth. The blow fell vastly heavier on my wing than the weight of the seven cities, notwithstanding that Michael and Israfil both caught Ali's arm in the air, to check its force."

"Mohammed promised twelve palaces in paradise to any one who would defeat the people of Yabis, and Ali, accepting the offer, desired to hear a description of the palaces. Mohammed said they were built of gold and silver bricks, with a cement of musk and amber. The pebbles around them are pearls and rubies, the earth saffron, its hillocks camphor, and through the court of each palace, flow rivers of honey, wine, milk, and water; the banks are adorned with various trees, and with pearls and coral. On the margin of those celestial streams are bowers, consisting each of one entire, hollow, transparent pearl. In each of these bowers is a throne with emerald feet, and adorned with ruby. On each throne sits a Hooree, arrayed in seventy green robes and seventy yellow robes of so fine a texture, and she is herself so transparent, that the marrow of her ancle, notwithstanding her robes and flesh and bone, is as distinctly visible as a flame in a glass vessel. Each Hooree has seventy locks of hair, every one under the care of a maid who perfumes the lock with a censer which God has created to smoke with perfume without the presence of fire. No mortal olfactory has ever breathed such incense as is there exhaled. 'My father and mother be your sacrifice!' exclaimed Ali; 'I will undertake the expedition.'"

* A multitude of sage proverbs, composed by Ali after the lapse of

"Years that bring the philosophic mind,"

and much quoted by good Mussulmans and others, contrast amusingly with these accounts of his youthful impetuosity. He seems throughout to have been a person of sterling worth, as well as more shining qualities.

At the battle of Motah, Jafer, the standard-bearer, having had his right hand cut off, grasped his charge with his left. When that too was gone, he folded the banner to his bosom with his bleeding arms, and bore it until he fell, covered with ninety wounds, all in front. Mahomet went in person to his house to announce the woful tidings to his family, and taking the little son of the widow in his lap, began stroking his head with his hands in such a way that the mother guessed all. The prophet then, bursting into tears, declared to her the martyrdom of her husband. "Both his hands were cut off," he said; "but God has given him, in exchange, two emerald wings, with which he now flies where he pleases, among the angels of Paradise."

Six years after Mahomet's flight to Medina, he undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca, in the sacred month, when there was a cessation of hostilities, and all animosities were supposed to be at peace for a season. The fugitives were naturally anxious to revisit their old home and their long-estranged friends, and their leader ardently desired to link the new religion with the old, and establish his position as a reformer rather than a destroyer of the ancient worship of Arabia. But he found himself and his followers not included in the general amity. His approach was viewed with dread, and envoys were sent to meet him, to ascertain his intentions and to warn him against any hostile attempt. These envoys were confounded at the reverence with which they saw him treated. "I have seen the King of Persia and the emperor of Constantinople, surrounded by their courts," said one of them; "but never did I behold a sovereign so much revered as Mahomet." This account increased the alarm of the Meccans, and all that Mahomet could obtain, without a siege of his native city, was a treaty for ten years, allowing himself and his followers three days' sojourn in Mecca at the time of pilgrimage, not to take effect, however, until the next year.

To console his troops for their disappointment, he led them against Khaibar, a Jewish city which was known to be wealthy. His favorite Ali, for zeal and courage surnamed the Lion of God, was the bearer of the saved standard on this occasion; "a man," said Mahomet, "who loves God and his prophet, and whom God and his prophet love." The

strong citadel of Khaibar was taken after prodigious effort, and the spoils were sufficient to console the conquerors for the lost pilgrimage; but their adored leader here received the earnest of death in a poisoned shoulder of lamb, set before him by a treacherous woman. He had but tasted the food when his suspicions were aroused; but so virulent was the drug, that a single taste sufficed to taint his blood, and to prepare the slow consuming fire that at length brought him to the grave. One of his companions, who had not so soon taken warning, died immediately. The prophet returned to Medina, and unconscious of the fatal sentence written in his forehead, occupied himself in sending to the great potentates of earth messages which must have seemed to them like those of a madman, summoning them to embrace Islamism, and to acknowledge himself as the last and greatest of the prophets. Khosru, King of Persia, by way of reply, sent to his viceroy at Yemen, — “Restore this madman at Medina to his senses, or if you cannot, bring me his head.” Before long, this viceroy, having turned Mussulman, was continued in his office by the clemency of Mahomet. Heraclius, the Roman emperor, at Constantinople, received the prophet’s missive with more respect, and made valuable presents to the messenger. So did also the viceroy of Egypt, the king of Ethiopia, and the king of Bahrain, although some of the Arabian princes had not yet learned to treat the growing power of Islam with the consideration it deserved.

A triumphal pilgrimage to Mecca marked the next year; and when, after devout performance of all the customary rites, the prophet marched back to Medina, ambassadors came from all parts of Arabia to felicitate him upon his victories; whole tribes became his converts, and he began to think of foreign conquests. He now issued a public declaration, that all who did not forsake their idols and embrace the true faith within four months should be exterminated, and the success of his arms gave fearful force to the threat.

But his personal career was drawing rapidly to a close, and he was himself conscious of the decay of his strength. Under these circumstances, he prepared for his last and most splendid pilgrimage, which he took care should be a model as to its religious observances. Throngs attended him, — one hundred and fourteen thousand persons, according to some

authorities, — and he was felt to be as completely the master of Mecca as he had ever been of Medina. He marched through the Caaba, stopping before each of its multitude of idols, and saying “There is no God but God ! Truth is come, and lies are done away !” upon which his followers cast down the image and broke it in pieces.

When all was completed, he returned to Medina, and prepared himself for the last change, with the dignity and composure of a man who feels that he has finished his work, and that nothing remains but to lay down his commission as submissively as he accepted it. His cautions and directions to his weeping followers may almost be said to be without a taint of self, his sole anxiety being for such a regulation of affairs as should secure the triumphant spread of the faith. He called for his two grandchildren, the sons of Ali, his only remaining hope of successors in his line of descent, and embracing them fondly, said, “O Lord, I commit them to thee and to the worthy of the faithful.” Ali watched his dying bed in all the bitterness of grief, and Mahomet exhibited a woman’s tenderness for this true brother of his heart and follower of his fortunes. One tradition declares, that the prophet would have Ali in his bed at the last hour, and that he died with his arm over this beloved friend. To his wives he said, “Rend not your garments nor hair, nor weep for me.” To his disciples, “I do but go before you ; you will soon follow me. Death awaits us all ; let no one, then, seek to turn it aside from me. My life has been for your good, so will be my death.” As death approached, his thoughts were wholly absorbed in religion. He ordered the manumission of all his slaves, and the distribution of all his money in alms to the poor. Then, raising his eyes to heaven, he said “God be with me in the death-struggle !” Ayesha, his favorite wife, sustained his head in her lap, and endeavored to soothe his dying agonies. He had a kind word for all, but his solitudes seemed wholly spiritual. From time to time, he would dip his hand in water and feebly sprinkle his face. At length, after gazing fixedly upward for some time, he said in broken accents, “O Allah, be it so — among the glories — in Paradise !” and was no more.

In this frame of mind died a man who had struggled out of heathenism into such spiritual light as was vouchsafed to him,

fixing his eyes on that light, and pressing towards it with an intensity of devotion which few, to whom its full radiance is granted, care to imitate. Such reality of belief, such fervor of zeal, such habitual awe of the Divine Being, may indeed put to shame the majority of the Christian world. That he fell into great practical inconsistencies, and that among the ordinances of his law may be found traces of license abhorrent to our Christian ideas, cannot be denied; and as the splendor of Mahomet's personal qualities throws concentrated light on his personal faults, so the immense diffusion and results of his teaching have fixed the attention of the Christian world upon the false portion of his doctrine with an almost exclusive intensity, while the good has passed as a thing of course, and for which no credit is due, because he who announced it allowed himself to use deception in declaring it to the people, whose conversion he desired with a fervor of zeal which we, of this cooler time and clime, can scarcely understand or believe in. But surely, his errors may be considered those of his age and country; while we must, in common justice, acknowledge his keen perception and hearty appreciation of the highest truths to be such as few men of any age or country attain. Prejudice has long been satisfied to consider the most objectionable points in Mahomet's system as the fruit of an evil nature seeking authority for indulgence; but more candid and diligent inquirers confess, that not only the idea of propagating religion by the sword, but much of the license of the Koran, is drawn from the Mosaic ritual. Like the inspired lawgiver, the reformer of Arabia was obliged to accommodate his requisitions to the reigning ideas; he gave to the people such truths as they were able to bear, perhaps all that he himself was permitted to receive. His desire to raise the standard of manners and the moral tone of his countrymen is most obvious; and in those points of his code which have more particularly served as texts of reprobation, Dr. Forster shows, by an elaborate parallel between his ordinances and those of Moses, that Mahomet's imitation was exact. The powers of his understanding, the energy and fervor of his spirit, his grand personal qualities, and all the favors of fortune that attended his wonderful career, were laid on the altar to which he had vowed himself, with a singleness and humility of soul before God which no candid mind can fail to perceive

in his history ; — that grand, lonely, barbaric altar, which no kindred soul had helped him to raise or to sustain, but above which, in the hours of meditation and prayer, in night-watches, on the battle-field, and on the bed of death, he failed not to see the Shekinah hovering, with a glorious distinctness too little coveted or sought by later religionists, who are made indifferent by superabundance of instruction, and ungrateful by unrecognized privileges.

Tradition says that, in person, Mahomet was large and full-formed ; neither tall nor short ; his head somewhat large, and his hair and beard black and abundant, though not worn in extreme length.

“ If his hair was sometimes long,” says the Hyât-ul-Kuloob, “ he parted it in the middle to each side of his head. His face was luminously white, his forehead broad, his eyebrows narrow, long, and arching. There was a vein in the middle of his forehead, which became particularly prominent when he was angry. His nose was long, thin, and aquiline ; his lips thin, and his mouth not diminutive, but expressive of sweetness. His teeth were brilliantly white and not closely set, and his smile is represented as enchanting. His shoulders were broad, his joints strong and hollowed, which is a mark of bravery and physical power particularly prized among the Arabs. His hands and fingers were long ; the sole of his foot deeply hollowed, and the top round and smooth, so that if a drop of water fell on it, it immediately rolled off. He did not drag his feet, like proud people, but raised them and stepped properly, at the same time bowing his head like one descending a declivity, not bearing it aloft, like a haughty man. His steps were long, but he walked leisurely and with dignity. When he addressed a person, he did not look at him from the corner of his eye, like a rich and haughty person, but turned his body towards the individual he addressed. Continual sorrow weighed on his mind. He never was without thought and business, and he never spoke unnecessarily. His diction was concise and fraught with meaning ; illustrating his subject, without redundancy, yet perfectly perspicuous. His temper was gentle, and he thought no one abject or despicable. Small favors were much valued by him ; he never praised what he ate or drank, nor was he ever angry at the loss or destruction of worldly goods. But when the fact reached him that truth and equity had suffered, he became so disguised by anger for the Lord’s sake that one could not recognize him, and no one could stand in his presence till the truth was vindicated. In company

he claimed no place or position as peculiarly his own, but forbade such a thing, and would seat himself in any unoccupied place at the lower end of the room. When he spoke, the company inclined towards him, and were silent and still, as if a bird had perched on their heads."

There were five things which Mahomet declared he would never abandon: — to eat on the ground with servants; to ride on an ass with a blanket instead of a saddle; to milk goats with his own hand; to wear woollen garments; and to salute children. One tradition substitutes mending shoes and sandals for milking goats; but it is certain that the prophet's personal habits were of the simplest. His bed consisted of an Arab cloak, and his pillow, of a skin filled with date-leaves. One night, his attendants doubled his thin bed, that he might sleep more comfortably. Next morning he slept beyond the time for prayers, and he forbade the future doubling of the cloak. His food in general was dates and barley-bread, with milk and honey. He swept his chamber, lit his fire, mended his clothes, and was his own servant. His wife, Ayesha, speaking of her early married life, said, "For a whole month we did not light a fire to dress our food, which was nothing but dates and water, unless some one sent us meat: The people of the prophet's household never got wheat bread two successive days."

Such is the testimony, gathered from various authorities, respecting the private character and more familiar traits of this mighty genius; and the simplicity and consistency of the picture lead us to accept it as a portrait. Another hand adds that, when he was angry, "perspiration fell like pearls from his blessed forehead;" and we can well believe it. Such power without a foundation of passion would be an anomaly in the history of mere mortal men; and we must feel the depth of the passion before we can fully appreciate the habitual benignity and tenderness, which all agree to have been so remarkable in Mahomet. His love of his children was excessive,* and it was destined to be the source of bitter

* Ockley says that Mahomet was so fond of his grandsons, Hasan and Hosein, the sons of Ali and Fatima, that when he was prostrate at prayers he would "elbow the little Hasan to come and climb upon him, and hold him on, and prolong the prayers on purpose. Nay, sometimes, in the midst of a discourse to the people, if he saw them running towards him, he would come down to them and embrace them, and take them up with him into the pulpit; then, making a short apology in behalf of their innocence and tender age, proceed with his discourse."

anguish to him ; for they died one by one, some in infancy, some in maturity, until he was left nearly childless at the time of his death. His wives, of whom he married many after the death of Cadijah, brought him no son, — the one good gift for himself that he desired of God, with unwearied supplication and hope. Let this fact soften in some degree our horror at the stain of unlimited polygamy which he incurred, scarce converted heathen as he was, with inbred ideas favorable to his wishes, and what he doubtless considered to be full sanction in the Mosaic ritual, which was his first teacher in a better school. The kindness and consideration he evinced for his family deserve the imitation of Christian husbands ; and the reverence approaching adoration, with which he inspired all his wives, shows the truth and genial wisdom of his character. The picture of his wedded life with Cadijah, in whom alone of all he seems to have found a true companion and friend, is without a fault ; and when his favorite among her successors, in the insolence of youthful beauty, ventured to take him to task for his persevering remembrance of this earliest attachment, asking if Allah had not given him a better wife, meaning herself, — “ Never,” he exclaimed, “ did God give me a better ! When I was poor, she enriched me ; when I was called a liar, she believed in me ; when I was under the curse of my tribe and the world, she remained true to me, and loved me the better for my misfortunes.” This was the testimony of his heart to the pre-eminence of a true and pure marriage ; and so well understood was this constancy of his, that we are told that whenever any one of his wives wished to ingratiate herself with him, she began by praising Cadijah.

If we should be asked whether we are ready to exonerate the prophet of Arabia from all imputation of imposture, we should be obliged to answer in the negative ; but we not only find no evidence that he was deliberately, at heart and with an evil purpose, an impostor, but overwhelming testimony to the contrary. History teaches us that, of all powers granted to mortal man, that of swaying the hearts of the multitude is most beset with temptations. When genius and opportunity concur to this result, nothing short of heavenly wisdom has ever yet preserved a successful leader from using the gift for special — not to say selfish — purposes, under cover of the

popular welfare. Popular enthusiasm loves to be deluded; it will not accept pure truth, but insists on the infusion of some element of marvellousness, terror, or pathos — something histrionic — in short, something by means of which passion shall find employment in aid of reason, which soon becomes cold and burthensome to unmastered minds. No man can long sway a multitude without discovering this sympathetically; and what sympathy discovers, instinct prompts the means of meeting and using. Mahomet, with his personal endowments; the wonderful natural genius which imparted such a living energy to his thoughts; his excellent character for truth, honesty, and wisdom, and a temperament deeply religious and absorbent of devotional ideas, was able to perceive the degradation of the national faith, even in the midst of Jewish and Christian corruption, which might have kept almost any form of paganism in countenance. His meditations upon high themes continually widened the immense distance between his own perceptions and conclusions, and the unawakened mind of his nation. To him the commonalty became in some sort as children, of whose condition development is the most urgent want; while to them he was but a gloomy enthusiast, whose brain was turned by conceit and fanaticism. Standing thus in opposition, he long maintained a profound silence, like the cloud while its charge is momentarily increasing; until first in faint flashes and distant murmurs, then in lightning-spears and terrors of awful threatening, his power issued forth, fertilizing at once and desolating its pathway. That Mahomet was as much surprised at the success of his mission as any one else could possibly be, we truly believe; to think otherwise is to grant him all he claimed in the character of a prophet. Like other men to whom it has been given to promulgate fundamental truths, he evidently had but a very limited conception of the ultimate power of his doctrines.

“When he reached Medina,” says Mr. Irving, “he had no idea of the worldly power that awaited him; his only thought was to build a humble mosque where he might preach; his only hope that he might be suffered to preach with impunity. . . . The fanatic zeal with which he inspired his followers did more for his success than his military science; their belief in his doctrine of predestination produced victories which no military cal-

culuation could have anticipated. . . . His military triumphs awakened no pride or vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. The riches which poured in upon him from the spoils of war, were expended in promoting the faith, and in relieving the poor among its votaries, insomuch that his treasury was often drained of its last coin. . . . However he betrayed the alloy of earth after he had worldly power at his command, the early aspirations of his spirit continually returned, and bore him above all earthly things."

That a torrent of success so unexpected that it probably seemed to himself miraculous, left him some virtue and some humility is perhaps more surprising than that it should have wakened the more earthy and heathen part of his nature, and caused him at times to forget his sincere love and admiration of goodness. To that love and admiration, and the persevering energy with which he expressed them, whether with or without the aid of imposture, the world owes the civilizing and humanizing stream of science, arts, literature, and philosophy, which flowed like balm over great part of Asia and Africa, replacing the lowest idolatry and fetichism by a knowledge of the only true God, and a devotion which is allowed by Christian observers to be more intelligent, absorbing, and vital, than a purer faith can always induce.*

"The completeness of its mental domination is one of the most noted and best ascertained facts in the early history of Mahometanism," says Dr. Forster. "It is legible in the high enthusiasm which characterized the first Moslems, from the near friends of the prophet to his meanest followers, from the leaders of the Saracen armies to the servile refuse of the camp. . . . The rude idolatry of Scythia or of inner Africa, and the refined and venerable superstition of the Persian Magi, alike fell prostrate before the law of the Koran ; while the new converts, bound together as brethren by this common tie, forgot their personal

* Sir William Jones, on his voyage to India, found in the island of Johanna, a secluded speck in the Atlantic, off the coast of Africa, the following inscription in Arabic, over the door of a mosque :

The world was given us for our own edification,
Not for the purpose of raising sumptuous buildings ;
Life for the discharge of moral and religious duties,
Not for pleasurable indulgences ;
Wealth to be liberally bestowed,
Not avariciously hoarded ;
And learning to produce good actions,
Not empty disputes.

prejudices and national antipathies, as they fought side by side for the propagation of their adopted faith."

We could gladly follow Mr. Irving through the marvellous career of the new faith ; the dissensions which ensued when its founder, far from providing for a dynasty, died without even naming a successor, taking care only, like some good Christian clergyman, that his pulpit should be supplied ; the suddenness with which the scattered and rival clans of the Arabian peninsula, forgetting for the first time their domestic hostilities, acknowledged one spirit of unanimity and fraternal fellowship ; the rapidity with which Islam, encountering simultaneously the rival empires of Rome and Persia in the East, established itself upon the ruins of Christianity and the Magian superstition, and the long train of splendor marking its course for a period of twelve hundred years. "Within twelve years after the Hegira," says one authority, "thirty-six thousand cities, towns, and castles are said to have been subjugated by the new conquerors ; four thousand Christian temples destroyed, and fourteen hundred mosques erected. Africa was soon subdued, and the Moors converted to the new religion, who in their turn descended into Spain, there to establish a magnificent empire. The victorious standard of the crescent was raised on the cold mountains of Tartary and on the burning sands of Ethiopia. The Moslem empire extended from the Atlantic to Japan, across the continents of Asia and Africa, into Spain, and into France as far north as the Loire." Under its influence, Bagdad had a college of six thousand pupils and professors ; grand Cairo, twenty colleges and a royal library of one hundred thousand manuscripts ; Cordova, a library of two hundred and eighty thousand volumes ; the kingdom of Andalusia, more than seventy libraries ; mathematics, astronomy, anatomy, surgery, chemistry, and botany were pursued far in advance of all the rest of the world of that day, and, in short, the whole treasury of knowledge and elegance in possession of the converts of him whom it has been the fashion to represent as a mere charlatan, playing tricks upon the world's credulity for his own private advantage.

But we forbear, lest we be found writing a book upon a book. Our parting word shall be this : — We will consent to

see Mahomet placarded as an impostor, when the world is ready to mete out the same measure to every religious teacher who thinks "economy" advisable in the dispensation of truth ; to every Christian minister who subscribes to a solemn creed "for substance of doctrine," some particulars of which he does not believe, or who acknowledges among his brethren more liberality of sentiment than he considers "safe" for the people of his charge ; to every writer who wilfully devises clap-trap ; to every politician who uses, to serve his own purposes — the nation's good being identical with his own, of course — party watchwords which he knows to be founded on wrong or misapprehension in the multitude ; to every leader, in short, who, in his zeal for the instruction of the people, alters, disguises, or embellishes the truth. Of odium thus equitably distributed, we honestly believe Mahomet could afford to accept his full share.

ART. II. — *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul ; with Dissertations on the Sources of the Writings of St. Luke, and the Ships and Navigation of the Ancients.*
By JAMES SMITH, Esq., of Gordanhill, F. R. S., &c.
London : Longmans. 1848. 8vo. pp. 307.

THE author of this book is an English gentleman of education, fortune, and leisure, "a yacht sailor of more than thirty years standing," who has concentrated all the resources of extensive study, observation, and maritime experience on the illustration of the narrative of St. Paul's shipwreck. The result has been, in the first place, the identification of every locality, the delineation of every nautical equipment and manœuvre, and the verification of every incident recorded by the sacred historian ; and, secondly, the accumulation of materials of unprecedented copiousness and interest as regards the construction and management of ancient ships. On account of the large amount and variety of general information which it furnishes, and also because of the numerous authorities on our table this is the only recent publication, we have selected it as a text for an article on the Navigation